THREE ACTS OF THE GENERALL ASSEMBLY, FOR PROMOVING the KNOVVLEDG OF THE GROUNDS OF SALVATION, AND OBSERVING the RULES OF DISCIPLINE.

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Overture for Ordering of Lecturing and Catechising, to be observed while the next Generall Assembly.

Edinburgh 2. August, 1652. Antemeridiem. *Sess. XVII.*

THe Generall Assembly, after consideration of the great controversie the Lord hath against the Land, for the manifold transgressions of his known Commands, and continued despising of Grace and Reconciliation offered through Jesus Christ, whereby transgressions might have been, and yet may be pardoned, and amended; And after acknowledgment of the just Quarrell he hath against us all his Ministers, for the sins of our Persons and Calling, for which he hath so shaken the Judicatories and Assemblies of this Kirk amongst us, and doth threaten to cast down altogether the hedge of Discipline, and to thrust all his Ministers for a time from their places; Do seriously exhort and charge all and every one intrusted with the holy Ministry, to stir up themselves to seek the Lord more carefully, and settle their own peace with him, and to make full proof of their Ministry, so long as the day of his patience continueth: And in particular, to bee

more diligent in the means of acquainting the people with the Scripture, and grounds of Religion held forth in the Catechisme, And to this end does Recommend,

1. That every Minister do so dispose of the time appointed for the reading of Scripture, as both the Order of the Directory, and Act of Uniformity in the point of Lecture, may be observed: That two Chapters being read, one of the Old Testament, and the other of the New, after reading of the first, some few Observations of the chief Doctrines being held forth, and propounded briefly and plainly to the people, time may be left to read the second Chapter, and to give some brief Observations on it also, as the time allowed will suffer.

2. For promoving the work of Catechising, the Assembly, besides that they renew the Act for Catechising weekly, 1. Recommends that also every Lords Day, when the people do most frequently conveen, some competent portion of the Catechism be explained before the whole Congregation (without prejudice of the Preaching) And Recommendeth that in this publike Catechetick instruction, the points that are handled, be propounded by question, to be answered by some called up for that purpose. 2. And becauſe many being bashfull to speak in publike audience, do either altogether absent themselves, or if they must compear, are so distempered with fear, that their edification is marred; The Assembly Recommendeth this Overture, that the Minister, in the publike Catechetick Instruction, call up some that are more able in knowledge, and prepared before, to answer the points that are to be interrogat and explained, that all the Congregation may the more freely drink in knowledge, and more frequently attend such exercises; and that others, that are not so fit to speak in publike, be tryed in their knowledge, at the more private dyets of examination, or in their families. 3. That Ministers, beside publike teaching and instructing, be carefull, and make conscience to teach and instruct from house to house, and frequently visite the families

within

within their charge, on purpose for this very work; And try what pains Parents and Heads of Families take to instruct such as are under them, according to their station: and, if they find them negligent herein, to admonish them: and if, after ofter admonition, they continue in that sinfull negligence, to bring them to more publike admonition before the Session. 4. That the Ministers and Sessions of every Congregation see, that such as have Schools in their bounds, exercise the young ones under their charge in getting the Catechism by heart, which will much serve to further the publike Catechetick Doctrine. 5. And that the Minister, with some of the Session appointed for that effect, do every quarter of a year, or so often as they can conveniently, visit the Schools in their bounds, to try what diligence is used in this: And if these that teach Schools shall be found negligent herein, and after admonition shall continue so, that course be taken to get them removed, and others put in their places.

The Assembly Recommends to Presbyteries to be seriously thinking upon further Overtures, which may be conducible for making Catechizing further usefull, and may serve for promoving the knowledge of God in the land, and to bring them [illegible] to the next Generall Assembly.

Act

Act concerning admitting Expectants to their trials, and Ruling Elders to act in Presbyteries and Synods.

Edinburgh 3. Auguſt, 1652. Antemeridiem. Seſſ. XIX.

THe Generall Aſſembly having, out of their earneſt deſire of the Peace and Unity of this Kirk, condeſcended upon an Overturd of Peace, and not onely propounded it to ſome Brethren who were here, oppoſite to the publict Judicatories of this Kirk; But alſo in purſuance of that end, Ordained the ſaid Overture, to be preſented and offered by the ſeverall Presbyteries or Synods, to all in their reſpective bounds, who hes Proteſted againſt, and Declined, or conſented or adhered unto the Proteſtations and Declinatours made againſt this and the preceeding Generall Aſſemblie, and the conditions therein contained, to be required of them; And conſidering the great prejudice like to ariſe to this Kirk, by increaſing of our unhappie differences and diſtractions, if young men ſhall be admitted into the Miniſtry, which ſhall ſtill blow the fire of contention, and continue in avowed oppoſition to, and contempt of the publick Judicatories, Therefore Ordaines Presbyteries to take ſpeciall care, that upon the calling of any Expectant to a particular charge of the Miniſtry, before

before they admit him to his trialls, they require him under his hand, to passe from the Protestations and Declinatours against this and the preceeding Generall Assemblie, if he hath been accessory to the same, and to promise and give assurance that he shall abstain from holding up debates and controversies, about matters of differences in this Kirk, since the Assembly 1650, in Preaching, Writing, or other wayes. Upon the performance whereof, the Presbyterie shall proceed to his trialls, if not, in that case, the Presbyterie shall forbear to proceed untill the next Generall Assembly, leaving liberty to the Presbyterie and Congregation for planting of the place otherwise. And the Assembly Ordaines and requires that Presbyteries be not sudden to lay by such young men as at first refuses or scruples to perform these conditions mentioned, but that pains be taken upon them to convince them of the reasonablenesse thereof, and to perswade them to embrace them, and to give them a competent time for that effect.

Likeas the Assembly considering the prejudice of Elders comming to Presbyteries for strengthening a faction in opposition to the publick Judicatories, Ordains, that Presbyteries shall require the same things fore-mentioned of every Ruling Elder that comes to sit and act in Presbyteries, and in case of his refusall, shall not admit him to act as an Elder in the Presbyterie, but require the Kirk Session from which he is sent, to make choise of, and send another, who for the Peace of this Church, shall agree to perform the conditions required.

Act for putting in execution former Acts and constitutions of Generall Assemblies, anent trying, admitting, removing, and deposing of Church Officers, censuring of scandalous persons, receiving of penitents, and debarring of persons from the LORDS Table.

Edinburgh 3. August, 1652. Postmeridiem. Sess. XX.

THe Generall Assembly, considering the obligations that lyes upon all Ecclesiastick Judicatories, and Ministers within this Land, by the commandement of God, and our Covenants, and Engagements taken upon us, before God and the World (whereunto they resolve, in the power of the Lords might, constantly to adhere) and to shew themselves faithfull, and zealous in all their administrations, for the Lord, and for advancing the Work of Reformation, and particularly, considering that the condition of this time doth require in speciall wayes, that in trying, admitting, removing, and deposing of Church Officers, censuring of scandalous persons, dispensing of Ordinances, receiving of penitents, the rules of the Word of God, and constitutions of this Kirk be diligently put in execution and acuratly observed.

Therefore,

The Assembly Ordains, that Presbyteries and Synods, in admitting of Persons to the Ministry, be acurate in their trialls, according

cording to the order prescribed in this Church, that none be admitted to the holy and high function, but such as are qualified according as is required in the Word of God, and constitutions of this Kirk, both for knowledge in the mysterie of godlinesse, and abilities to teach and convince the gain-sayers, as also in conversation and godlinesse, that they lay hands suddenly on no man, nor be partaker of other mens sin, and for this end that every Presbyterie be carefull to have gathered together such Acts of Assemblies as concerneth the triall of Ministers, and have them before them, whensoever any person is called to any place of the Ministery, and is upon his trialls.

2. Ordaines that Presbyteries and Synods, in their respective bounds, make conscience, that such Ministers as are found either ignorant and not apt to feed the people of God with knowledge and understanding, or erroneous in their judgement in matters of Religion, or are scandalous in their life and conversation, and are not examples unto their flocks in godly and holy walking, or disaffected to the work of Reformation, be censured according to the degree of their offence and Acts of Assemblies. And for this end, that they be frequent and acurate in visitation of Kirks, and therein make conscienscious use of the rules prescribed for visitations, and of such Acts of former Assemblies, as holds forth the duties of Ministers, and the grounds and causes of censure.

3. Ordains that, where Ministers lawfully deposed, are unlawfully admitted and not according to the Order prescribed in the Acts of Generall Assemblies, or intrudes themselves into places, Presbyteries and Synods make use of that Power and Authority which Christ hes put in their hands, to remedie the same, and to censure such disorders and enormities, as they deserve, And that people

be not accessory unto, or concurring with any Ministers that are deposed, in intruding themselves into places nor give them any countenance that does so, as they would not draw upon themselves the wrath of God, by contemning and despising Christs Ordinance of Discipline, And that no Presbyteries nor Synods proceed to open the mouths of, or readmit unto the Ministery, any deposed Ministers, but according to the Order prescribed in the Acts of Generall Assemblies, As they will be answerable unto the Generall Assemblie.

4. Ordaines that Sessions be carefull that none be admitted to be Elders in Congregations, but such as are in some competent measure able and qualified with knowledge of Religion, and understanding of the dueties of their calling, for discharging the dueties of that Office, and of a blameless christian and godly conversation; And that before any be admitted to be an Elder, the Persons name that is designed, be publickly intimate to the Congregation the Lords Day before, that if any have any thing to object against him, they may come and present the same to the Session or to the Minister. And that if any Elder be found negligent in the duties of his charge, and continue so after admonition, or scandalous in his life and conversation, or to be a neglecter of the worship of God in his Family, he be removed from and purged out of the Session.

5. Ordaines that Sessions and Presbyteries be carefull, and make conscience by all means to censure impartially all persons of whatsoever rank or condition, that are scandalous, either in things of the first, or in things of the second Table, according to the Rules and Order which Christ hath prescribed in his Word, and to proceed to the highest censures, with such as are grossely and obstinatly scandalous

lous, or are ignorant, and contemn, and continuedly neglect the means of knowledge, as publike and private catechizing, &c. after they are made inexcusable by sufficient means used to reclaim and gain them.

6. Ordaines that Ministers and Sessions in Congregations be carefull, as they will be answerable to CHRIST JESUS, to debar from the LORDS Table, all such persons as are found not to walk sutably to the Gospel, and being convinced and admonished thereof, do not reform; As also all such as have not knowledge to examine themselves, and to discern the LORDS Body. And that for the more orderly performing of this, the Minister in examination of the people, have some of the Elders alwayes with him, and represent unto the Session such as are found grossely ignorant, that by order of the Session they may be debarred.

7. That Presbyteries and Sessions make conscience, that such persons as are found scandalous, and are under censure for that cause, be not received nor absolved from their censure, unlesse they give such satisfaction and evidences of their repentance, as are expressed in the Acts of the Assemblies, concerning the receiving of penitents.

J. Makghie.

FINIS.